

growing **HEALTHY** kids

**Tips for Families
with Preschoolers
of all Shapes
and Sizes**

www.michigan.gov/cvh

www.fcs.msue.msu.edu/resources.html



grow
your
Kids
with
fruits
and
veggies

Why should you be interested in reading this booklet?

For families, having a healthy child is important. You know that health concerns, such as an earache, cold, or flu should be addressed. But, did you know that healthy eating and physical activity are keys to lifelong health? Healthy eating and physical activity can help prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers. The goal of this booklet is to show families how to:

- *Role model healthy behaviors.*
- *Make healthy eating easy for all family members.*
- *Make it easy for all family members to be physically active.*
- *Help children enjoy healthy food and physical activity at a young age.*

The following trends outline reasons why children's lifestyles and health are a concern.

Children are eating:

- More calories
- Larger servings
- More food outside the home
- More convenience foods
- Less fruit
- Fewer vegetables
- Less milk

Children are less physically active due to:

- More "sitting" activities (like watching television and playing computer and video games)
- Less outdoor play
- Concerns over safety in neighborhoods and schools

Growing Healthy Kids provides simple tips for families with preschool age children of all shapes and sizes.

Suggestions are made on how to improve the health of the entire family by role modeling healthy behaviors, being physically active, and by creating a home environment that supports healthy choices.



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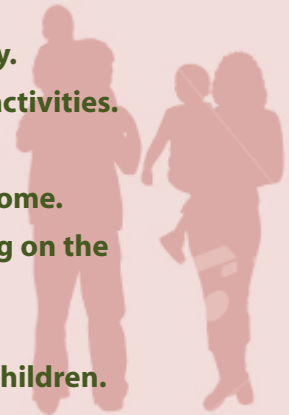
The Family's Role

Families and caregivers can work together to make a home where it is easy to eat healthy and be physically active. You can help your child learn healthy habits. It doesn't matter if your child is in preschool or a senior in high school...it's never too late to improve eating habits and become more physically active!

When it comes to making healthy food choices and being physically active, adults need to be role models and involve children in making healthy living decisions. Here's a simple guide:

Adults

- Offer a variety of foods that are healthy and taste good.
- Help children learn to listen to body signals of hunger and fullness.
- Eat together! Try to serve healthy meals and snacks at regular times – routine is important!
- Show respect for yourself, your child and others, regardless of body size or shape.
- Set a good example by being physically active and eating healthy.
- Help children try different individual, team, and family physical activities.
- Involve children in grocery shopping and meal planning.
- Talk about healthy meal choices when your kids eat away from home.
- Limit the amount of time children spend watching TV and playing on the computer.
- Find ways other than food to reward children.
- Find ways other than taking away physical activity to discipline children.



Children

- Listen to body signals of hunger and fullness.
- Choose how much to eat at meals and snacks.
- Choose ways to be physically active.
- Help prepare meals and snacks.
- Choose foods wisely away from home.

Consider sharing these ideas with those who care for your child such as:

Day care providers
Grandparents
Camp counselors
Coaches
Babysitters

Your Healthy Home



Keep healthy foods on hand and in view

We eat what we see. Sounds simple enough, but many families don't keep a bowl of fruit out on the counter or keep their pantry or freezer stocked with fruits and veggies. Doing this can help your family eat more fruits and vegetables each day!

Create a pleasant mealtime environment

Creating a pleasant mealtime is critical to getting children to eat healthful foods.

The best mealtime environment requires setting rules and having consistent meal times.

- Limit snacking and sweetened drinks before meals so kids come to the table hungry. When hungry, kids will try new foods more often.
- Encourage new foods. Serve a small portion and don't force your child to finish it. It often takes multiple tries for a child to taste something new.
- Role model healthy eating. Eat your fruits and vegetables!
- Offer the same meal to everyone in the family. Don't be a short order cook. If you are serving a new main dish, make sure the side dishes are something you know will be liked by all.
- Establish a consistent meal and snack schedule.
- Have the kids help with some simple meal preparation tasks like mixing ingredients or setting the table. They are more likely to try something they helped prepare.
- Remain focused on keeping the meal or snack as the main event by reserving the use of toys, telephone calls, and TV for another time.

Ready to Eat?

Make a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables attractive and easy to eat by prewashing and precutting. Keep your favorite low-calorie dips on hand.

Time for a Treat!

Healthy food does not mean boring or bland. Get creative! Explore new fruits and vegetables. Experiment with preparation techniques for lean meats. Switch to whole grain pastas. Discover new flavors, scents, and textures with herbs and spices.



For rewards, think HEALTHY!

When your child deserves a reward for a job well done, offer a trip to the park, a special bike ride, or a chance to try something new – like karate or a dance class!

Feeding Challenges

If your child announces "I won't eat" or "I'm not eating lunch" don't react. Make it be known that the entire family is expected at the table during mealtime even if it is just to keep everyone company. Once children realize they are not going to be made to eat, they will often start eating on their own.



Fit Families at Home

Families can do a lot to help kids be active. Did you know that regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, colon cancer, and diabetes for every family member? Regular physical activity also strengthens the heart and lungs and builds healthier joints and stronger muscles. Regular physical activity in preschool children also stimulates brain development. Building regular physical activity into your child's day, can also help with positive academic results. By setting a good example and getting involved in physical activity, families can make an impact that will last a lifetime!

Move More Each Day!

- Join your child in playing catch, jumping rope, or playing hide and seek or hopscotch.
- Try a new activity together! How about dancing, roller-skating, playing miniature golf, or doing a "fun walk/run" as a family?
- Walk to the store or play-ground instead of driving.
- Visit a local park or trail – take a family walk, hike, or bike ride. Don't forget to wear your helmets.
- Promote healthy outdoor activities like tag, walking the dog, nature walks, ice-skating, or making snowmen.



Is the weather slowing down your physical activity?

- Dance with your child to songs with a good beat. Teach him or her some "moves" from your childhood or use a dance video.
- Have the "Olympics" at home by acting out sports movements without the equipment like dribbling, throwing, kicking, jumping, and swimming different strokes.
- Build an obstacle course around the house.
- Find out if a school nearby has a swimming pool, "open gym", or allows walking in the building.
- Bundle up and go sledding or build a snow fort.
- Spend some time at an ice-skating or roller-skating rink.
- Learn something new with your child! Go to the library and check out a videotape on a new activity like yoga or karate.
- Work on different movements like clapping, jumping, kicking, rolling, stomping, balancing, climbing, marching, running, and twisting.
- Build up to working on more advanced movements like bouncing, flying, galloping, catching, chasing, leaping, skipping, and throwing and hopping.

Sit Less Each Day!

- Set a daily limit of no more than two hours on the amount of screen time your kids spend:
 - Watching TV, movies, or videos;
 - Using the computer; and
 - Playing video or other electronic games.



Helpful Hints:

- Use a family bike ride, trip to a park, or gift certificate for a sporting goods store as the reward for good behavior or special achievement.
- Purchase birthday or holiday gifts that promote physical activity like dance games, skates, bikes, balls, scooters, jump ropes, or a trampoline.
- Save gas and gain health benefits by walking, biking, or blading to destinations (instead of using a car).

Healthy Kids: All Shapes and Sizes



Should I put my child on a diet?

No! Dieting is not recommended! Withholding food may make your child always think about food and cause overeating when food is available.

It can also create a fear of going hungry that results in sneaking or hiding food.

Offer meals and snacks that include a variety of healthy foods like whole grains, lean meats, vegetables, fruits, and low-fat dairy products. Encourage your child to eat slowly until satisfied...then stop. Even sweets can have a place in the diet in moderation.

How do I know if my child is at a healthy weight?

Kids grow in spurts and may seem too heavy for their height at one time and just right or too slender at another. Some people are born with body types that naturally carry more or less weight than others. If it seems that your child has a weight problem, it's important to talk with a health care provider. The health care provider can help you know if your child will "grow into" a healthy weight. A medical exam can also help determine if a prescription for physical activity or referral to a registered dietitian is needed.

Make Health Your Focus, Not Body Size

What if my child is being teased or bullied because of his or her size?

Don't minimize the pain that comes from the cruel behavior of others. Listen carefully. Reinforce your love. Discuss the lack of respect bullies or teasers have for others. Think of some quick, humorous responses your child might use in these situations. (For example, "I didn't know you cared?" or "Thank you!") If the situation gets out of hand, it is time for you to step in and talk to the preschool teacher, day care provider, or other parents. All children deserve safe and supportive environments and to be treated fairly and with respect.

What if the doctor says my child is overweight or underweight?

A child who is overweight or underweight needs support, acceptance, and encouragement from the family. Here are some words you can say to your child:

- "People come in all shapes and sizes and that's okay."
- "Healthy eating and physical activity are important in getting the body that is right for you."

When there is a concern about a child's weight, the whole family needs to focus on eating well and being physically active. This way everyone is healthier. Don't single out the overweight or underweight child. Make healthy eating and physical activity fun for all family members.

Listen To Your Body

Your Child's Body Knows Best About Eating

"HUNGER MESSAGES" tell us when to eat and "FULL MESSAGES" tell us when to stop. Help your child learn to listen to body signals.

A child's body messages can be blocked.

- Eating too fast can make it harder to sense the message of fullness.
- Scolding, arguing, or other unpleasant meal time situations may cause a child to eat faster to escape.
- Overeating may be a response to an emotional issue that needs attention.
- Getting too hungry may cause unhealthy snacking or unintentional overeating.
- Distractions such as a TV or computer may contribute to overeating.
- Thirst can be mistaken for hunger.

Parents can help children listen to their body messages better.

- Work with your child to eat slowly, take a break, and then return for seconds if still hungry.
- Relaxed surroundings and plenty of time to eat make it easier to sense hunger and fullness.
- A daily routine of regular meal times and snack times with a variety of healthy foods promotes good eating habits.
- Setting a good example allows your child to learn how to eat well.

Avoid Saying:

"No dinner for you!"
Withholding food as a punishment may cause fear of hunger and lead to overeating.

"No second servings." This command can leave a child afraid that hunger won't be satisfied.

"If you eat your vegetables, you can have dessert." Using sweet treats as a reward makes them more desirable than other foods and may lead to ignoring body signals of fullness.

"Clean your plate." This command tells a child to ignore the body message of fullness.

Breakfast Boosts Brain Power

Start
every day with
a **Healthy Habit!**
Eat breakfast
with your
kids.



Why Breakfast?

- Eating breakfast can prevent overeating later in the day.
- Eating breakfast can improve your child's learning ability.
- Kids who eat breakfast learn better and behave better in school.

Tired of cold cereal and toast? You can still eat healthy!

Add leftovers to your usual breakfast foods!

- Slice of veggie pizza
- Small dish of macaroni and cheese
- Bean and salsa burrito
- Hard cooked egg
- Small dish of rice and beans
- Low-fat or skim milk
- Whole or sliced fruit
- 1 cup of 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- Low-fat yogurt



In a rush?

Pack a **Grab-N-Go Breakfast** to eat while heading out the door for preschool or day care. Try:

Whole fruit, 1/2 a whole grain bagel, and a single serving container of low fat or skim milk.

Granola bar, cheese stick, and a 100% juice box.

Whole grain tortilla spread with peanut butter around a banana along with a single serving container of low fat or skim milk.

What's Served at Preschool or Day Care?



Stay involved!

Did you know that adults are responsible for “**what**,” “**when**,” and “**where**” of feeding? Children are responsible for “**how much**” and “**whether**” of eating.

Ask your preschool or day care provider if they have a feeding policy that addresses division of responsibility.

A healthy feeding policy includes statements like:

- ① **Our program provides nutritious, regularly scheduled meals and snacks. We take time to help children relax and prepare to eat.**
 - ⦿ We sit down to eat with children and have pleasant meal times.
 - ⦿ We help children learn to behave well at meal and snack times.
- ② **Our program follows federal and state guidelines to plan meals and snacks.**
 - ⦿ We keep in mind the special food needs of small children.
 - ⦿ We offer familiar and popular foods along with unfamiliar foods.
 - ⦿ We let children eat what they like and also try out new foods.
- ③ **Our program trusts children to manage their own eating.**
 - ⦿ We let children pick and choose from the food we make available.
 - ⦿ We let children eat as little or as much of the food as they want. Some days children eat a lot, other days, not so much. But they know how much they need.
 - ⦿ We do not limit the amounts children eat.
 - ⦿ We do not force children to eat certain foods or certain amounts of food.

Excerpt from www.ellynsatter.com

Ideas For Packing A Healthy Lunch & Snacks

- ⦿ A sandwich
- ⦿ Canned or fresh fruit in bite-sized pieces
- ⦿ Veggies like baby carrots, celery, cucumber slices, or pepper slices
- ⦿ Skim or low fat milk, low fat pudding, or low fat yogurt in a single serve container
- ⦿ Something fun – like cheese cut into silly shapes with cookie cutters, granola bar, or soup in a thermos



Children will eat, they will eat what they need, and they will learn to eat the new foods that we offer.

Food - To - Go

- ⦿ Let your kids help make lunch and snacks. Kids are more likely to eat the food they bring to day care or preschool if they have some say in the menu and preparation. Even your kids can spread peanut butter on bread or put some cut up veggies in a single serve bag.
- ⦿ Keep food cold for safety! To keep food from spoiling and to decrease the risk of getting sick from food related germs, use an icepack.



Kids need a healthy lunch and snacks for energy to learn and play for the rest of the day.

I'm Thirsty



CUT THE SWEET DRINKS!

Most of these drinks have almost no nutritional value. A 20-ounce bottle of soda pop has around 20 teaspoons of sugar! Encourage everyone in the family to choose low fat milk, skim milk, or water at every meal.

**Be a
role model
by drinking
water
daily!**

Sometimes the simple things are the healthiest. Go for WATER! Water is the least costly and most available beverage around. Tell your kids not to wait until they are thirsty. Water is important for a healthy body! So drink up!

- Carry a water bottle with you and send one to preschool or daycare.
- Stop by a water fountain.
- Keep a pitcher in the fridge.
- Have a large glass of water next to you at home.

It's okay to have sweetened drinks once in a while...but as a rule, don't keep them in the house. This includes, soda pops, fruit punches, sport drinks, sweetened iced teas, and flavored fruit drinks or juice drinks.

Most kids need to drink at least 2-3 glasses of milk and plenty of water daily. Milk is full of nutrients your body needs. Water keeps your body working right. Your family's health is important so push the healthy beverages each day.

2 cups of milk a day!

Milk and milk products are loaded with calcium*. Kids and adults both need calcium for strong and healthy bones and teeth. Kids need to drink low fat or skim milk and eat other dairy products like low fat cheeses or low fat yogurt! They have the same amount of calcium as higher fat products and fewer calories.

*Other sources of calcium include cheese, yogurt, fortified soy products, and dark green leafy vegetables.



LACTOSE INTOLERANT?

Ask your health care provider for information on lactose free dairy products!

Where does JUICE fit in?

Eating whole fruit is always better than drinking juice. Whole fruit contains fiber along with vitamins and minerals. Save juice for a snack and watch the amount you provide.

The recommended portion is one cup of 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Juice is a healthy choice, but drinking it "like water" will add many extra calories.

While 100% fruit and vegetable juice fit into the fruit group and vegetable group, it is suggested that juice be limited to one serving per day. To be healthy, children also need to eat fresh, canned, or frozen fruits and vegetables to get the fiber and other important nutrients needed to stay healthy. So, go easy on the juice!



Fit Families on the Move

How Much Activity is Healthy?

Children need enjoyable physical activities that total at least 60 minutes per day.

The activity can be moderate, but should make the heart beat faster and the breathing heavier than normal. Remember: active play counts as physical activity!

At Day Care or Preschool: Make Physical Activity A Daily Habit!

- Encourage your child to fully participate in classroom or group activities that include movement.
- Check with your child's day care provider or teacher to see what you can do at home to help improve your child's health and fitness level.
- Help your child to be prepared for activities with comfortable clothes and athletic shoes for indoor and outdoor activities.
- Encourage your child's daycare provider or teacher to have a scheduled 15 minute recess or physical activity break in the morning and afternoon.

What About Sports?

Sports give children a chance to learn skills and be active. If your child is interested in playing a team sport, give your support. Try:

- Floor Hockey
- Flag Football
- Cheerleading
- Basketball
- Soccer
- T-Ball



Sports are not for everyone. If your child is not interested, don't force the issue. You can encourage your child to be active in other ways like:

- Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Karate



Young kids are coordinated! A child's balance, low center of gravity, flexibility and positive attitude make starting the following activities easy at a young age. Just provide proper safety gear... especially a helmet.

- Gymnastics/Tumbling
- Bicycling
- Rollerblading
- Roller skating
- Snowboarding
- Skiing
- Skateboarding
- Scootering



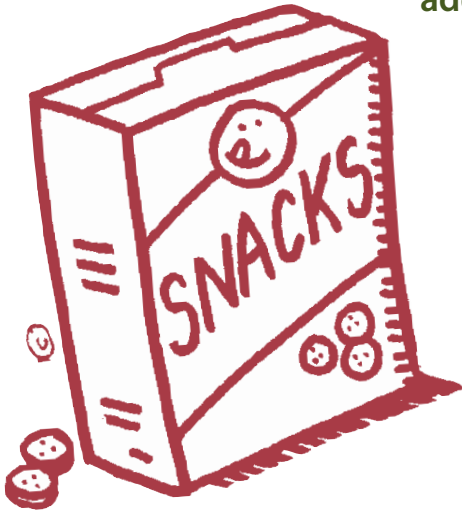
In Your Community: Get Active!

- Check out what your community has to offer. Explore Community Education, Parks & Recreation Programs, 4-H Youth Programs, YMCA Programs, and Sports Teams.
- Take advantage of skate parks, school facilities, nature trails, walking paths, community pools, playgrounds and park areas, which are all great places for families to have fun and get fit together!

Plan For Healthy Snacks



Growing kids sometimes need to eat more often than adults – especially when activity levels are high. Snacks are important to boost energy and prevent between-meal hunger. Healthy snacks add variety and needed nutrients to kid's diets.



- Plan mid-day snacks after preschool or day care to prevent overeating at dinner due to extreme hunger.
- On days when preschool or day care is not offered and on weekends, offer a mid-morning snack if needed.
- Keep snacks small and healthy! Snacks are just to “hold you over” until the next meal.
- Remember... children need to eat about every two or three hours.
- It is best to keep the time and location of meals consistent and to offer snacks between meals and before bedtime.
- Children are most hungry in the afternoon and in the evening.
- It is okay to let your child have a snack even if he/she didn't eat much at mealtime.

Take a SNACK when on the GO!

- Applesauce in single serving container
- Animal crackers or graham crackers
- Whole fruit
- Pretzels or rice cakes
- Whole grain crackers
- Fig bars

Is This A Whole Grain?

Read the ingredient list on the food label to be sure. Most foods will have “whole” or “whole grain” listed before the grain ingredient's name (wheat, oats, corn, or rye). The whole grain should be the first ingredient listed. Some exceptions that are still whole grains are: brown rice, oatmeal, popcorn, wild rice, and bulgur.

Plan Snacks to “Hold You Over”

- Peanut butter and jelly half sandwich on whole grain bread
- Low fat cottage cheese with fruit
- Fresh fruit with low fat yogurt for dipping
- Canned fruit in its own juice
- Snack size low fat pudding
- Canned tuna mixed with low fat mayo on whole grain toast
- Fresh vegetables, like baby carrots, with low fat salad dressing dip
- Unsweetened whole grain cereal with sliced fruit
- Lean meat and low fat cheese sandwich on whole grain bread
- Baked chips with salsa

Snacks
are a great
way to fit in
more fruits and
vegetables!

Healthy Choices Away From Home

Families are busy these days. Many eat meals on the go and away from home. Try eating out only once or twice a week and search for healthy options. Healthy choices are not hard to find if you know what to ask for.



Here are a few simple tips:

What about dessert?

Try a fruit cup or frozen yogurt. Split one dessert between two or three people.

What should I have to drink?

Order milk or water instead of soda pop. Regular soda pop has lots of sugar and no nutritional value.

Would you like fries with that?

Instead of fries, try a baked potato, a side dish of fruit, or a green salad. Ask for your dressing "on the side" or choose low fat.

Would you like to SUPER-SIZE your combo meal?

Say no! For smaller portions, order foods individually off the menu. It may cost a bit more, but you won't be tempted to finish a meal when you're already full. Super-sizing gives you extra large portions that often get eaten just because the food is in front of you.

CAUTION!

Less healthy choices are often described using the words below:

Alfredo
Au Gratin
Batter Dipped
Breaded
Buttered
Cheese Sauce
Creamed
Crispy
Fried
In Gravy
Smothered

BE HEALTHY

Instead look for:

Baked
Broiled
Au Jus
Steamed

Do it MY WAY! Ideas to make your meal on the go healthier!

- Get mayo and tarter sauce on the side and use less.
- Add ketchup, mustard or relish, instead of mayo, for extra flavor.
- Ask for extra lettuce, onion, and tomatoes.
- Take 1/2 of your meal home and have it for a meal tomorrow.
- Split a meal or side order with a family member or friend.



Healthy Family Checklist



Done!

- ① Our family eats meals together ☐
- ② Fresh fruit and veggies are available for grab-n-go snacks ☐
- ③ Sweet, high fat, or high salt food is limited in our home
(Cookies, cakes, candy, chips, doughnuts, pastries, sugary cereal etc) ☐
- ④ Low fat milk or water is offered during meals and snacks ☐
- ⑤ Our kid's good behavior is rewarded with non-food items ☐
- ⑥ Screen time for our kids is limited to less than 2 hours a day
(Including TV, computer - internet, instant messaging - and video games) ☐
- ⑦ The television is turned-off during meals ☐
- ⑧ Our kids do not have a TV in their bedroom ☐
- ⑨ Our family is physically active together 3 - 5 days a week ☐
- ⑩ Our kids have lots of time to run and play in safe places ☐





Michigan Department
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EXTENSION

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